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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/03/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [HO](#)  
SUBJECT: PEPE LOBO'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE A POSITIVE  
ADDITION TO THE TICKET

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Simon Henshaw, reason 1.4 (b & d  
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11. (C) Summary. PolCouns met with Porfirio Lobo's (National Party) vice presidential candidate Maria Antonieta Guillen de Bogran to discuss her candidacy and the Lobo campaign strategy. Guillen said she believes deeply in Lobo and his ability to make positive changes in Honduras, and said the campaign will focus on promoting development in the agricultural sector, security, and promoting the family. She has been a positive addition to the campaign, which she said will begin in earnest on or about October 1. End Summary.

12. (C) PolCouns met with National Party Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo's Vice Presidential candidate Maria Antonieta Guillen de Bogran on September 2. Guillen is an educated professional who has spent the past fifteen years working as a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Tourism and in an NGO to promote education. She has been a long-time supporter of the National Party, but has never run for office. Guillen told PolCouns she hesitated to accept Lobo's offer to be his vice president because of her lack of experience, but eventually acquiesced because she found him to be honest and straightforward, and because she believes in him and his ability to make positive changes in Honduras.

13. (C) Although it is uncommon for Honduran presidential politics to be fought on the basis of platforms and issues, Guillen told us that nonetheless, Lobo has decided to run on three main issues. He will present these throughout his campaign, which will not begin in earnest until approximately 45 days before the primary election on November 16. She also noted that Lobo will decline any invitations to public debate with other candidates. (Note: In 2004, Lobo was seen to have been roundly defeated in a public debate with now-President Manuel Zelaya, which explains his reluctance. End Note.) The three issues are:

a) Promoting development in the agricultural sector: Lobo comes from a small town in Olancho (the "Wild, wild West of Honduras"), where he and his family made their vast fortunes in ranching and agriculture. Lobo feels that with the high price of basic foodstuffs and the general food crisis being felt in Honduras, people will respond to this initiative. In addition, as Lobo received his degree in agronomy from the University of Florida, he feels he has some knowledge to add to this issue.

b) Security: Following his defeat in the 2004 elections, Lobo understands that support for the death penalty and too much of a strong hand ("Mano Dura") policing is politically fatal. He continues to believe, however, that security remains one of the most important issues stunting development in Honduras. His plan this campaign season will be more comprehensive, and include prevention and rehabilitation. Lobo also proposes to create a mega-ministry that will encompass all aspects of security, including the Ministry of Governance and Justice and the Ministry of Security. He envisions it to be similar to the USG's Department of Homeland Security.

c) Promoting the Family: Guillen said that she sees her role to be focused on this last goal of strengthening the family. This will involve promoting education and public health for children and may involve giving annual cash bonuses to families who vaccinate their children and keep them in school. This effort will involve many ministries and institutions including Health, Education, Women, Development, and SANAA (water quality). It will also include day care, early education, and after school programs. Guillen pledged to involve the private sector and donors in a comprehensive plan.

14. (C) Comment: Although inexperienced, Guillen is well-educated, well-spoken, and very beautiful (a big plus in Honduran politics). Following her appointment, some journalists noted that Lobo had chosen her to "counterbalance his ugliness." She has a squeaky clean image and is known to be religious without being radical, which are both big

positives for the Lobo campaign. As the position of vice president was only instituted in 2004, Honduras has yet to decide what exact role they expect of a person in this position, so an extensive political resume is not yet a prerequisite. End comment.

HENSHAW